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ADVOCATE OF PEACE.

No. XL.

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REMINISCENCES OF WILLIAM LADD.*

There is no want of respect, and confidence, and love on the part of the people for such men as William Ladd, who raise themselves above the common tone, and stand upon the high moral elevation of the principles of Jesus Christ. It may be believed that their notes are too sweet to blend with the harsh sounds which the collisions of selfishness cause to grate upon the ear; that their theories are better fitted for heaven than for this lower earth. Still they love and reverence the kind-hearted advocate of peace. Whenever William Ladd spoke, the people crowded to listen to him. They hung upon his accents with delight, for his soul was in his work, and the people easily detect heart-work from head-work; they distinguish the disposition to lead men, from the desire to govern them. During the last years of his life, when he had become known, he never failed to fill the largest churches and public rooms; and if he made not converts to his own faith, he left his audience, standing in the light of a friend to each and every one who had listened to him. He had confidence in the eternal principles of truth. He had faith in the moral nature of man. He uttered his convictions boldly, manfully. He would say, "The sword *shall* be beaten into the ploughshare, the spear into a pruning-hook; the day *is* coming when men

* We take these extracts from an article in the number of the Democratic Review for March, 1842, on account both of their intrinsic value, and of the interest which our readers will ever feel in our lamented friend. We know the origin of the article, and can assure them of its being entitled to their entire confidence.—ED. ADV.

shall learn war no more for ever. I believe it; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." And then he would draw so beautiful a picture of a world in peace, of the day when every nation should draw together the bonds of love, when man should knit himself close to his brother man, when in place of the sword men should approach each other with the olive-branch in their hands, and with words of kindness on their lips, with love glistening from their eyes! We wonder not that he drew all hearts to him, for it was holding out, as it were, to the starving, weather-beaten, tempest-tossed mariner the picture of a happy home in the green valley, the fruits of the garden hanging ripe and ruddy for his parched lips, the calm of a summer evening for his storm-worn frame, the embrace of his wife, the merry shout of his children, for his homesick heart. No wonder that he touched and moved his audience. If he made them not peace-men to the full extent, he left on their minds a deep impression of the false nature of martial glory, of the hideous lie that is covered up by the splendor of military array.

We remember his description of the field of Waterloo; he cleared off the smoke which covers up the slaughter-house aspect of the battle-field. He showed us what a fight was, stripped of the veil which "glory" has drawn over its enormities. He pointed to the heaps of carnage—told us that it was fifteen days before all the wounded could be removed, and that many for this full time, in the heat of the sun by day, in the chills and dews at night—their pillow the already dead, their couch a pool of blood—for more than two weeks, there they cursed and raved as if death mocked at them in their misery, holding them at arm's length, permitting them neither to live nor die—and at this very time the city of London illuminated, and the bells ringing, and the cannon thundering out the joy of the nation that another laurel had been won, that the national glory was complete! "Go now, mother," we have heard him say, "go now, and educate your loved child to the profession of arms. Fill his young heart with aspirations for glory. Let him shout at the military array. Deck his baby form in the garb of the soldier; put a feather in his cap; place in his tiny hands the mock instruments of human butchery; determine that the infant which now draws from your bosom its nourishment, determine that he shall be the butcher of other men, or lay down himself with thousands of others in the pool of blood on some battle-field, to utter his dying groans amid the

shouts for victory, while some camp follower strips his body for plunder almost before he is dead."

We do not quote his words, but have tried to give some idea of his manner, to show why the people so loved to hear him speak. His speech and manner were peculiar; difficult to imitate or describe. In person he was large, even to corpulency; his face round and full, beaming with intelligence and benevolence; his forehead high and noble, while his head was entirely bald, save a few gray curls clustering on his neck. His appearance impressed the audience with the striking traits of his character—gentle-heartedness, enthusiasm, and intelligence. He appeared a truly venerable man. His memory was peculiarly retentive, and every fact or incident, bearing on his cause, was distinctly remembered, and told in a simple, artless manner. He had always some story to tell, often of a humorous kind, which was so pleasantly related, that it made him at once the friend of the audience; and thus having gained their ear, his after eloquence touched their hearts. His manner disarmed all prejudices; the most inveterate opposer of the peace doctrine had, for a time at least, to yield to his opinions, and listen attentively to the speaker. Few men have spoken so often or so long without any abatement of the interest of his hearers.

The character of his mind was not of a fanciful or theoretic cast. He was not a metaphysician—had no tendency to abstractions. In his various employments—as a shipmaster, as a merchant, as a farmer, in the care of his property, he exhibited plain, practical common sense, with a good-natured interest in the happiness of all around him. His benevolence manifested itself, rather in the desire to diffuse happiness generally, than in a hot, and hasty, and ardent attachment in a limited circle. These traits of good common sense, general kindness, with a cultivated and retentive mind, when devoted to the cause of peace, gave him his power. They saved him from the common faults of reformers, which militate against their general usefulness, and tie them to some little clique. He was never intolerant nor denunciatory; while he opened his whole heart, and declared his own opinions boldly, he did not hate if those opinions were not fully adopted, but was thankful when in the least degree he could overcome the military tone, and make even a slight lodgment for the principles of peace.

The common fault of reformers is, that they are intolerant in their feelings, and denunciatory in their language. The very elements of character which enable them to rise above a common error—earnestness of conviction, self-confidence, and energy—expose them to this characteristic failing. Even as the advocates of peace, they are inclined to be combative; and while they would strike the weapon from their brother's hand, their own tongues are sometimes sharper than any two-edged sword. They seem to forget that, though all men receive the pure light from heaven, its rays are bent and distorted by the dense medium through which they penetrate. Errors of opinion and errors of practice arise often from the relative position of men, from their education, from their associations. Many an ardent abolitionist would have held slaves had he been born south of Mason's and Dixon's line; many a soldier would have been a man of peace, had his education been in a theological seminary, or in the family of a Friend. God alone can judge of the relative moral strength of his children. He alone seeth the heart, and looketh to the source of opinion and action. When men sit on his judgment-seat, oh, how fallible and how feeble must be their judgments!

William Ladd, in a great degree, escaped this intolerance. While he boldly declared his opinion, that all war is wrong in the eye of Heaven, that no man who has the spirit of Christ in his heart can fight, he remembered that "in the day of darkness God winketh at the transgressor;" he remembered that there have been warriors who used the battle-axe with an honest, conscientious feeling that they were in the discharge of their duty both to God and to men. He was full of the kindly feelings, even to his opponents, and he commanded respect by the firm, distinct, honest, straight-forward avowal of his "ultra-ism." He received their reverence, because his soul was so deeply imbued with the meek, and forgiving, and self-sacrificing spirit of the religion he professed. His very childlike gentleness, united with his firm, uncompromising principles, his untiring zeal, and his whole-souled devotion to the truth, drew all hearts toward him.

It was not mere good-nature, but the adoption of the peace principles, which made him thus gentle-hearted. A story which he often told with peculiar relish, will illustrate this moulding of his character—the gradual progress of his mind in adopting the peace principles. "I had," said he, "a fine

field of grain, growing upon an out-farm at some distance from the homestead. Whenever I rode by I saw my neighbor Pulsifer's sheep in the lot, destroying my hopes of a harvest. These sheep were of the gaunt, long-legged kind, active as spaniels; they could spring over the highest fence, and no partition-wall could keep them out. I complained to neighbor Pulsifer about them, sent him frequent messages, but all without avail. Perhaps they would be kept out for a day or two, but the legs of his sheep were long, and my grain rather more tempting than the adjoining pasture. I rode by again—the sheep were still there; I became angry, and told my men to set the dogs on them, and if that would not do, I would pay them if they would shoot the sheep.

"I rode away much agitated, for I was not so much a peace man then as I am now, and I felt literally full of fight. All at once a light flashed in upon me. I asked myself, Would it not be well for you to try in your own conduct the peace principle you are preaching to others? I thought it all over, and settled down my mind as to the best course to be pursued."

"The next day I rode over to see neighbor Pulsifer. I found him chopping wood at his door. 'Good morning, neighbor.' No answer. 'Good morning,' I repeated. He gave a kind of grunt like a hog, without looking up. 'I came,' continued I, 'to see you about the sheep.' At this, he threw down his axe, and exclaimed, in a most angry manner, 'Now aren't you a pretty neighbor, to tell your men to kill my sheep? I heard of it—a rich man like you to shoot a poor man's sheep!'"

"'I was wrong, neighbor,' said I; 'but it wont do to let your sheep eat up all that grain; so I came over to say that I would take your sheep to my homestead pasture, and put them in with mine, and in the fall you may take them back, and if any one is missing, you may take your pick out of my whole flock.'"

"Pulsifer looked confounded—he did not know how to take me. At last he stammered out, 'Now, Squire, are you in earnest?' Certainly I am,' I answered; 'it is better for me to feed your sheep in my pasture on grass, than to feed them here on grain; and I see the fence can't keep them out.'"

"After a moment's silence—'The sheep shan't trouble you any more,' exclaimed Pulsifer. 'I will fether them all. But I'll let you know that when any man talks of shooting, I can

hoot too; and when they are kind and neighborly, I can be kind too.' The sheep never again trespassed on my lot. And my friends," he would continue, addressing the audience, "remember that when you talk of injuring your neighbors, they will talk of injuring you. When nations threaten to fight, other nations will be ready too. Love will beget love; a wish to be at peace will keep you in peace. You can overcome evil only with good. There is no other way."

We have heard it imputed as a fault in William Ladd, that he was in his discourses too much inclined to create the laugh; that his exuberant flow of spirits, his ready fund of anecdote, often tempted him from the dignity of his subject. But they who make this imputation do not understand the springs of human nature. To many minds the facts, the outside bearing, the personal illustration, are essential. They would see the result of opinions in action. They would practically test the principle. Besides, the way to reach the heart is first to arrest the attention, and establish a sympathy with the hearer, —more readily done perhaps by the pleasant story than by the soundness of logic. If his humor and playfulness at times overcame the sobriety of the temple, his frequent pathos, and his powerful appeal to the sympathies of his audience, carried them away captive to his eloquence. If at times some simple, colloquial, humorous strain came from his lips, it was sure to be followed by an appeal that shook the stoutest heart, and none left the meeting without having fixed upon his mind "the old man eloquent."

We now advert to another trait of his character. We hardly wish to call it enthusiasm, for that is fitful. It was a compound of tenacity of purpose, and a buoyancy of spirit which resulted in his keeping, year after year, distinctly before his view his great object, and pursuing it with an unwavering confidence that he should be ultimately successful. Though he keenly felt the cold sneer, the biting sarcasm, the undisguised contempt which often met his early efforts, these had only the effect to bring his mind up to a more vigorous wrestle with the prejudices of the times. Some years since he asked an assembled association of ministers in New Hampshire liberty to address them on the claims of the Peace Movement. The body unwillingly assented, and granted him a few minutes only. He spoke, but hardly had he warmed with his subject, when, the time expiring, he was abruptly and unfeelingly

stopped with an unfinished sentence on his lips. He sat down, covered his eyes with his hand, the tears streaming down his cheeks, and his lips quivering with emotion. His feelings were disregarded, and the body commenced a discussion on the wants of the Home Missionary Society. How did our Philanthropist bear this unkindness? There was no manifestation of anger. He returned good for evil. After his emotion had in some degree subsided, he arose and addressed the moderator. "Sir, I have only one child; I love her dearly, though her kindly spirit, her heavenly beauty, are not appreciated or seen by many. I have educated her, I have exerted myself for her success, I have devoted myself to her good. Sir, this child of my love is the American Peace Society. For her and in her name I wish to make a donation for Home Missions. Make the American Peace Society a life member of the Missionary Society, and may God speed *your* efforts for good." He then retired.

We mention this characteristic anecdote to show that it was not from want of feeling that he could withstand the trials to which all are exposed who war against the prejudices of the times. These trials came thick and heavy upon him, especially in the commencement of his career. They who seek only to revive once cherished sentiments, which have but just ceased to hold sway, or they who strive to kindle still brighter the zeal already glowing, cannot appreciate the trial to a sensitive mind to pour out itself to an unwilling ear—to utter thoughts against which the public mind is closed almost impenetrably—to keep up its zeal where a reluctant audience of some half a dozen is before the speaker. This is a trial of faith hard to be borne, but from which he never suffered himself to shrink.

This tenacity of purpose was not the mere rising up of the energies of the man to overcome obstacles. It was not in the moment of excitement a spasmodic action to meet occasional exigencies. It was a settled purpose, ever present to him, ever stimulating him to new efforts. It was, year in and year out, day by day, the framework of his spirit, rousing him to meet and destroy every barrier to his progress; and when the road was opened it gave him a rapid advance—as the same force of the winds which tears the ship from the grappling irons of the foe, will bear her onward swiftly over the free ocean. This tenacity of purpose resulted in untiring industry, the devotion of all his time, talents, learning, property, to the one great object, and made

him cry out, "Oh, God! give me a few more years, if it be thy will, that I may do something more for my Master, the Prince of Peace." It was this self-devotion that enabled him the last few months of his life to travel over the State of New York, weak and sick, in the dead of winter, by every means of conveyance, through cross-roads, in open wagons, his heavy frame disordered, his legs barely able to sustain his weight, conversing and lecturing, and when so weak that he could no longer stand in the pulpit, kneeling down, and in that painful posture to speak with force, and energy, and eloquence for hours.

We now come to the main-spring of his efforts. It was unquestionably a religious sense of duty. He was emphatically a pious man. Not a Pharisee, not a sectarian, not a selfish devotee, seeking his own salvation merely, like many, holding intercourse with God, as if a special grace could come to bless his isolated soul. His faith was the faith which springs from love to God and to man; and though from conviction he joined the Orthodox Congregational Church, and was during the few last years of his life a licensed minister of that denomination, he cut himself off from communion with none. He seemed too much imbued with the spirit of Christianity to need the entrenchments of sect as a guard to his creed. He believed that the peculiar feature of the revelation by Jesus was the abandonment of the old dispensation—an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth—and the establishment of the reign of peace and righteousness upon the earth; that the divine characteristic of his blessed Master was the forgiveness of enemies, the willingness to sacrifice even his life for them. And he looked forward to the time when Christians should no longer defile this faith of love with contentions for their own personal advantage, no longer soil the pure white dove with blood-stains, no longer, as if in mockery, drag the banner of the Cross into the battle-field, to wave in triumph over the destruction of those whom they are commanded to love. It was this faith which so refined his spirit, that upon the pure metal was reflected the countenance of the refiner.

If at any time he felt rising within him a spirit of denunciation, a harshness of feeling, it was when he spoke of the mingling of God and Belial by the prayers of the Christian pastor in the camp or in the battle-ship. "To pray," said he, "to a God of peace, through the self-sacrificing Prince of

Peace, for aid to do that for which the pirate and the assassin is hung,—for the priest to stand up and bless those on whom God has fastened a curse, and to curse those on whom He has pronounced a blessing,—to proclaim that the command to do good to all men is repealed, abrogated, of no effect,—that to rob and murder are no sins, because the leader has a piece of parchment as a commission so to do,—God pardon them, and give me the feelings with which I should look upon my brother sinners ! ”

In 1812, on the opening of our last war, he retired to Minot, in the State of Maine, where his family owned a large tract of land. He purchased the whole of it, built a large house, and began the business of a farmer with his accustomed energy. There he commenced his literary career, reading much, and writing occasionally for the papers on agriculture and miscellaneous subjects. Though his house was almost in the wilderness, with a sparse population around it, his free hospitality, his talents, and his social feelings drew toward him a constant flow of company of the best and most distinguished men in the land. This was his home for the rest of his life, nearly thirty years; he gave his attention to his agricultural pursuits, to his books, to his friends in the summer, and during the winter he was over the whole country as the Apostle of Peace. He thus in the summer recruited his strength and increased his resources, coming out each successive year with new strength to the winter's campaign. In his agricultural pursuits he was successful, and his example was useful to the surrounding country. He gave a tone to the whole town and vicinity, both to the morals and to the economical pursuits of the people. His zeal in his own peculiar work never interfered with his other duties. His farm was always a pattern for the neatness of its appearance and the skill with which it was “carried on.” Though absorbed in the great reform, he yet found time for every duty, possessing that rare combination of talents which can sway men's hearts, and yet take heed of all the minutæ of household affairs. It was not until age and increasing infirmities drove him *from the field*, that the farm suffered from inattention. He was scrupulously exact in his dealings, pains-taking in all that referred to his business occupation, and at the same time expended liberally in all the branches of moral reform.